



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Adenovirus

What is adenovirus?

Adenoviruses most commonly cause respiratory illness, such as the common cold, bronchitis, and pneumonia. They may also cause other illnesses, such as gastroenteritis, eye infections, bladder inflammation, and rash illness. Severe illnesses can occur in newborn or elderly patients or in patients with underlying medical conditions, but infection is generally not life-threatening in otherwise healthy adults. Some strains of adenoviruses may cause more severe illness than others strains. Patients with weakened immune systems are especially susceptible to severe complications of adenovirus infection.

How is adenovirus spread?

Adenoviruses are transmitted in different ways depending on the type of infection. Adenoviruses that cause respiratory and eye infections are transmitted by contact with secretions from an infected persons eyes, nose, or mouth. Adenoviruses that cause gastroenteritis are transmitted by contact with an infected person's feces (stool).

Who is at risk for adenovirus?

Anyone can get infected with adenoviruses. Infants and people with weakened immune systems or existing respiratory or cardiac disease are at higher risk of getting sick from an adenovirus infection. You can get infected with adenoviruses by having close contact with people who are infected these viruses or those who are sick. You can also get infected by touching surfaces or objects that have adenoviruses on them then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

How do I know if I have adenovirus?

See your health care provider. Your health care provider may order laboratory tests to determine if you have an adenoviral infection.

What are the symptoms of adenovirus?

Symptoms of adenoviral respiratory infections include common cold symptoms such as runny nose, sinus congestion, sore throat, and cough. Symptoms of lower respiratory infections may include shortness of breath, wheezing, chest pain, and fever. Symptoms of gastroenteritis may include vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps. Symptoms of adenoviral infection usually occur 3-5 days after exposure.

How is adenovirus treated?

Most infections are mild, require no specific therapy, and eventually resolve on their own. Treatment focuses on relieving the symptoms. Serious adenovirus illnesses are managed by treating symptoms and complications of the infection. Several antiviral drugs, including ribavirin, vidarabine, and cidofovir have been used to treat serious adenoviral infections, such as those caused by strain A14, but none have been very effective.

How is adenovirus prevented?

Since no vaccine exists for adenoviral infections, strict attention to good hand washing and respiratory etiquette are essential. Frequently and thoroughly wash hands, especially if you are ill or caring for others who are ill. Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, and discard used tissues promptly. Stay home if you are ill, and children who are ill should not attend school or child care. Proper sleep and nutrition practices are also important.

What makes the A14 strain different?

There are 51 types of adenoviruses that can cause human infections. The A14 strain was first identified to cause respiratory disease in military recruits in Europe in 1969 but was not very common. In 2007, this strain was found to cause many cases of illness in the U.S., with some of them being very severe.

How did this strain emerge?

Viruses naturally mutate (change) as they multiply and are transmitted from one person to another. Different strains circulate at different times based on movements of people and people's immunity to these different strains.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/adenovirus/>

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